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## Editorial

Information for Social Change sends solidarity greetings to comrades who are attending the "Social Responsibility Around the World" conference sponsored by the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) of the American Library Association. This event is being held in Washington DC on 28 and 29 June 1998. The Information for Social Change delegate will be Martyn Lowe.

Each organisation attending the conference will have 20 minutes to give an overview of its philosophy, activities, successes and failures, impact on the library profession, and impact on society in its own country. Solidarity links with other countries and international activities will be included. Proposals for further international cooperation will also be put forward. Information for Social Change has links with several progressive library organisations in Europe and we are working towards a European solidarity conference along the lines of SRRT.

Information for Social Change will be contributing to a number of SRRT Task Forces : Alternatives in Print ; Coretta Scott King Award ; Environment ; Feminist ; Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual ; International Responsibilities ; and Poverty Issues. Information will also be joining up with old friends such as : the Anti Nuclear Librarians Club (Japan) ; AKRIBIE (Germany) ; KRIBIBI (Austria) ; BIS (Sweden) ; and LIWO (South Africa).

Martyn Lowe will provide a full report for the next issue of Information for Social Change. The need for the SRRT conference and for organisations like Information for Social Change is underlined by John Pilger in his recent book "Hidden Agendas" (Vintage, 1998). He quotes Eduardo Galeano, master poet of black irony : "We are all invited to the world burial of socialism. All of humanity is in the funeral procession, they claim. I must confess, I don't believe it. This funeral has mistaken the corpse".

Pilger says that his book is "a tribute to people who, in refusing to attend the funeral, have brought light into the hidden agendas of governments, corporations and their bureaucracies". It is also "a tribute to those journalists who, by not consorting with power, begin the process of demystifying and disarming it."

As an example he tells the story of "Tell", a Nigerian magazine which is constantly being harassed by the government. He describes how "Tell" still publishes and circulates from a network of safe houses and with printers and vendors willing to risk their freedom, even their lives. According to the editor, "It is guerrilla journalism. We depend on the people for intelligence. When they tell us the soldiers are coming, we are on our way to the next location where the presses are waiting."

Information for Social Change and our comrades at the SRRT are part of this noble tradition. As a journalist friend told John Pilger : "Truth is always subversive, otherwise why should governments spend so much energy trying to suppress it ?"

**John Pateman**

# CO's and Slavery : Conscription and Conscientious Objection

"Refusing to bear arms" by Bart Hormone, Marc Stolwijk and Anton Luccioni (WRI, London, 1997).

Part one of a new reference work surveying the laws relating to Conscription & Conscientious objection throughout Europe has just been published by the War Resisters International [ WRI ]. This is an important work, and in order to understand it one must also put the work into a wider political context.

I should start this review by stating that I have an interest in the work, not only as a Pacifist, but as a member of WRI, and a regular volunteer within the International secretariat since 1985. Thus it is with a particular knowledge of the subject of conscientious objection (CO ) that I come to review this work.

The War Resisters International (WRI) was founded in 1921 as the Pacifist International, who's sections and associate organisational membership's are based around a statement that begins: 'War is a crime against humanity.'

Much of the work of WRI relates to CO issues, for which it has a UN consultative status. December 1st is designated as Prisoners for Peace day, for which the WRI produces a list of CO prisoners world wide. These lists are not only rolls of honour, but a campaigning tool too. Yet in order to understand this campaigning work, it is both necessary to understand how the WRI collects information upon CO law and the situation appertaining to COs, together with the history of conscription.

## A little History.

Living within a country (Britain) that has not had conscription since 1963, it is very easy to marginalise the struggle for CO rights as being only of concern to Pacifists. Yet the struggle to gain these rights has been long, and has not ended yet.

Although there has historically been people forced into the military, e.g. the 'press gang' which was employed by the British navy, such kidnappings were never systematic in nature. There were militias into which men were forced to go, but such enforcements were local in nature. It was only in February 1792 that the first modern system of conscription was legislated upon in France. Other countries were to follow with similar legislation, the justification for which was (and in most cases still is ) the 'patriotic' 'duty' to 'defend' the 'motherland' / 'fatherland', etc. Needless to say, none of these pieces of legislation provided for CO rights.

The imprisonment and torture of CO's has been a feature of the legislative process in almost every country of the world. During World War one British CO's were put to 'hard labour' on Dartmoor prison. Indeed, many of these Pacifists received such harsh treatment that either their health was broken, or they suffered nervous breakdowns. In

France between the world wars, CO's were taken to Devils Island. During the Nazi dictatorship German CO's were put into concentration camps. During 1983 some 70 CO's were shot in Iraq.

It should also perhaps be noted that the treatment handed out to CO's has in turn lead to many of the major prison reforms of this century. For example, it was the actions of imprisoned CO's that resulted in the ending of segregation within US Federal Prisons during the second world war. These were the same people that took part in the first Freedom Rides in 1946, and 1961.

Gradually CO rights have been struggled for and won. This has tended to follow a pattern, with first religious and then other pacifist objectors winning the 'right' to be conscripted into an 'alternative service'. Yet even as I write, the struggle continues, with CO's imprisoned world-wide. Still, in many countries of the world, there is no legislation that recognises the provision of CO rights. For example, in Turkey there is a major campaign to win this right by the Pacifist organisation ISKD, which has in turn been outlawed by the Turkish regime, while its members face long term incarceration within that country's military prisons.

#### Documentation for campaigning.

Perhaps it should be noted that pacifists within WRI do not see Conscientious Objection as an end in itself, but as part of the means towards the creation of a Nonviolent society.

It should be noted that there are a number of other international bodies that are concerned with the issue, ranging from Amnesty International (who's concern is that of prisoners of conscience), through to the European Bureau for Conscientious Objectors (EBCO). Plus there are the many national bodies like the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO) in the USA, or AT EASE, which is a counselling service that concerns itself with the various aspects of rights within the British military.

WRI collects and distributes information relating to CO law, yet for many years such information has had to be compiled on a piecemeal basis. The very nature of having to monitor changes to CO law globally, plus campaigning on CO and other issues, has resulted in there never being enough staff time to do more than produce country by country documentation on a need to be used immediately basis.

This is not to say that there has not been attempts before to produce an International directory of CO laws, but the very nature of changing laws and changing situations has resulted in what might be called a 'moveable' feast. Keeping files, from a WRI perspective, is something like a change around on a regular basis. For example, keeping track of the changes to CO laws within the ex - USSR and former Yugoslav countries has been a major job in itself. This says nothing about all those other places like Bermuda, where only very recently has the right to Conscientious objection been established. Another aspect of such file keeping is that it is very difficult to differentiate between the law, and case law when it comes to CO cases. In many

instances, such as that of Michael Maragakis in Greece, or Pepe Beuenza in Spain, the trial of these CO's has been closely paralleled with subsequent changes to the law.

During 1988 I had cause to be in Budapest, and met with the Hungarian Peace Council (HPC). At the meeting it was mentioned that there was a proposal to change the law, so as to introduce a right for CO's to perform 'alternative service' (It might also be noted that during world war two Hungarian CO's were shot). I was told that in order to draft a new law on conscription, the authorities wanted to study CO laws in other countries. I communicated this information need to WRI, and the relevant information was passed on. The new constitution of 1989 encompasses conscription, but there is also now provision to be a CO. I tell this story to illustrate a point, namely that it is very difficult to produce a definitive book which encompasses all the laws pertaining to Conscription throughout the world. The rate of change is too fast for such a reference book to be any more than almost accurate, but not quite !

This is not to say that there have not been attempts by WRI to publish works about the international CO situation. There have been attempts to keep the WRI constituent bodies up to date on changes relating to CO laws. For example, in such WRI periodicals as War Resistance, WRI Newsletter, the Broken Rifle, and now days within Peace News. Yet the sheer volume of information makes it difficult to publish more than the most basic news about what might be happening within any one country.

### A World Survey

"A World Survey : Compulsory military service and resistance to it" by Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe (WRI, 1968) is the only other work produced by WRI that covers the global issues relating to Conscription and CO Laws.

Although the legal and procedural information contained within this work are out of date, it is still of great use. The book includes a lot of historical information about how Conscription and Conscientious Objection developed. It also shows its age, because the book lists many countries that either no longer exist, or which changed their names many years ago. E.g. Ceylon, the USSR, Rhodesia, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, etc. while such new states as Namibia are not included. Neither does it contain a complete survey of all the countries of the world. Never the less, for its time it was a major undertaking, and one that has been an important reference work ever since.

It was after seeing this book on a visit to Brussels that Bart Horeman and Erik Hummels, noted the need for an undated version of this work.

### CONCODOC

In 1996 the CONCODOC project was established, and a grant made to the project by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, to cover the not inconsiderable research work. Now the first part of the survey has been published in a loose leaf format, in order to include all the inevitable updates that will be necessary over the coming years.

This first part covers Europe. A second part, covering the former USSR Countries, the Americas, Asia and Africa, will be published later in the year.

After the Forward and Acknowledgements the work starts with an introduction about the structure of the country reports. This is followed by a set of definitions about the terminology that is used within the work. For example: Conscript and Conscription, forced recruitment, substitute service, total objectors and total objection. Terms that have very specific meanings, but which are not so well used outside of Anti-militarist circles.

The work then gives country by country information, which is provided in the following ways:

1. Conscription and the Laws relating to it. This includes recruitment procedures, postponements and exceptions, etc.
2. Conscientious Objection and Substitute Service. This includes both legal rights, and Procedure and Practice.
3. Draft Evasion and Desertion. This includes both the penalties, and how deserters are treated in practice.
4. History. This relates more to the current situation, rather than a more historical account.
5. Annual Statistics.
6. A list of Sources.

The the major users of this work will be lawyers and organisations that concern themselves with immigration law. This work is not just about the legal situation pertaining to pacifists world-wide, but also about some fundamental human rights too. It is also a reference work for those who are concerned with the issues surrounding the status of refugees, something that WRI finds itself increasingly being asked to supply information about.

Copies of the work are available from:

WAR RESISTERS INTERNATIONAL  
5 CALEDONIAN ROAD,  
LONDON N.1

Part one costs £20.00 (£15 to non-profit organisations).

Part two, which should be available in September, will cost £40.00 (£30.00 to non-profit organisation).

**Martyn Lowe**

## K is for Culture

This interview with Scottish writer James Kelman appeared in Scottish Trade Union Review, number 68, January - February 1995.

Your recent writings have created something of a stir amongst the literary establishment. You don't really set out to get up their noses do you ?

Well, it has to be said that, eh, usually I get good reviews from the actual literary establishment. I've been publishing now for 22 years and my work has caused a bit of controversy all the time during that period. Now obviously the Booker prize thing brought an awful lot of stuff out the closet...whether these prejudices are basically elitist, or racist, a lot of people felt very up front about being able to attack myself and by implication, the community of people that they think I am part of and also write about, so I allowed them to come out and attack that quite blatantly and that's been a very interesting thing...

I certainly don't set out to get up their noses, although it's quite pleasant when you do. I never actually consider the audience at any time, whether good or bad. I just set out to write the story...to make it...to cleanse it... so it stands properly and is not open to misinterpretation and any ambiguities. I just take great pains with each story so that every comma is my comma, every full stop's mine...just so that everything is as precise as it should be, that's my only aim.

Your writing has brought you fame and, some might say, notoriety. You previously refused to attend a Booker Prize giving last year, yet you did attend and accept the winner's prize this year. Can you explain this change of heart ?

Well, you know, I considered going the first time and didn't go...and the same again this time I considered going or not going and eventually did go for different reasons. I don't think it's a big enough deal to warrant acting on principle about it...it's important to the literary establishment and that includes the whole book selling industry but I don't regard prizes in that way at all for writers, I don't think it's as important to writers as all that really.

An article entitled "Scotland the Depraved" which says that Scotland's literary image is a nation of drunks, drug addicts and drop outs, quite clearly fits you within this framework and actually gives you the title of being the leader of this literary school. How do you feel about this type of criticism?

Writers like myself or Tom Leonard or Irving Welsh or any writer or artist who seems to be dwelling on the culture of the working classes is a threat.

An obvious example was Michael Kelly, a fairly established figure within the Labour Party, being a former Lord Provost of Glasgow, where he took the trouble to write to the Scotsman saying something along the lines of "Well I've not read Kelman's novel but from what I hear it's written in a language that you wouldn't want to read, because it's the type of thing you can hear daily from taxi driven and plumbers". Basically what



he is saying is it's not worthy of literature - so there you have an extremely elitist statement by a member of the Labour party establishment in Scotland. And in a way that's a sort of general thing...it was an essential part of what was going on, say, since 1986/87, and came to a crescendo in the Year of Culture.

Most of the attacks on us were from the soft left in the establishment, Glasgow District Council or occasionally the Region. They were really upset by the independence of the artists and that independence is also a left wing independence which, in a sense, is also the independence of the ordinary people and I think that the threat for them is that, although the structures tell them that they are in control of the people occasionally they aren't. As for example we saw during the poll tax struggle where obviously it was the people that won that fight.

I think all our work really, the work of many of the artists in Scotland, is an attack on authority, is always an attack on authority...where that authority is left wing as in this country, it's still an attack. I mean let's face it, the Labour Party establishment, of course, their claim to fame is that they'll manage the market economy better than the Tories...I mean they're just in there showing that they're better managers. And they're also primarily engaged in appealing to the, say, the two prongs of late capitalist economies - in other words both industry and the city and finance - and trying to play that sort of game. So we don't fit in of course with any of that and they attack us in any way they can.

Another part of this that's also very important here - most of the top jobs in Scottish public life are held by English people...even those who are not English really...people who have assimilated the values of the upper middle class elite in England. This is not a nationalist position or xenophobia about English people...it's a very clear political point. What you find is that the people who form the bulk of the (Scottish) establishment...these are a sort of comprador class you would say, from other struggles and other parts of the world. They're people who are kind of, they've been bought, that's basically it, they've been bought. Artists like myself, and also political activists or cultural activists who are engaged in a way different to what they would like, would be attacked by this group of people that I am describing as a kind of assimilationists, this kind of comprador class. They're upset by what they see as the dwelling on working classness in the base material of my writing, for example. They...actually it's almost like they're ashamed of it you know...just imagine, they're meeting all these people socially who are were born and bred into this...and they want to kind of show that there's no difference between them, or if there's a difference it's something to do with highland mists or something like that. I think the fact is that they're ashamed because they implicitly accept their own inferiority. So many people, so many Scottish people who are in authority, or part of the authority structure, basically feel inferior to those who are genuinely upper middle class English, because they are genuinely that. So they get very upset when they discover that there's all this going on by people who are actually fighting or in struggle against it, because the bottom line is they've sold out, so they don't like to be reminded of it.

Also, just like any country under imperial rule - which is basically what Scotland has been, like so many other countries in the former empire - our education system is

designed to teach us that we are inferior. Our kids are always taught that they're failures, they're taught that their language is debased, they're taught that their culture is debased. Of course in some countries this has happened in much worse way than the likes of Scotland and Wales. For example, the Kurdish people the children go through the education system and they're actually taught that they don't exist....you could say like in the way the Scottish Gaelic community were essentially taught that they didn't exist either. Their language didn't actually exist never mind it was debased, whereas us we are taught our language is debased. So it's a very complex thing about why people are so threatened within Scotland about what the artists in Scotland are doing. The implications of that throws the whole education structure into disarray.

So you would say that there is nothing wrong with the language of joiners, plumbers, welders?

I mean, this is, it's so absolutely ridiculous and saying it's absolutely ridiculous is to give it the benefit of the doubt. Ultimately the establishment want - the best possible mode for them is - silence, they want silence. They can censor and they often do censor but they much prefer that people censor themselves and that people are silent. So there's this incredible onslaught all the time on ordinary people that your language is a debased thing and therefore we don't want to hear it, and it doesn't have the value of our language and it doesn't deserve to be heard.

You know, how can anyone's language be bad or not good enough? There is no such thing as a hierarchy of language or a hierarchy of culture or a hierarchy of art. That's real kind of elitist and right wing propaganda and the problem is that an awful lot of people believe it. This is why let's say an ordinary kind of kid in Glasgow when you're at your parents, it's not only the teacher that gives you a doin' for saying doon instead of down or aye instead of yes, a lot of the times its your mother: she also gies ye a slap and says now you've got to, now don't say that, you know...don't say doon, you know. So I mean the level of propaganda that's been kind of imbibed by people to keep each other down is quite incredible you know.

How is it possible to say that someone's language is wrong? Language equates with peoples existence, it's like saying that someones life is wrong. What does it mean when a politician says of an ordinary citizen that their life is wrong? What does it actually mean?

Is it possible to explain to us how in fact you go about building up your (hopeless, unambitious, inarticulate characters) and their social conditions ?

Well, right away, obviously, it's debatable whether or not that is the situation of my characters. In other words I don't necessarily think it's hopeless or unambitious or inarticulate at all.

But the question about how you build it up...I think I just try, like any writer should be allowed...I just want to work within my own experience really. That means like everything in my experience, including whatever I've read in life, or whatever I've watched on television but most importantly whatever I've come into contact with, or

whatever, in my community, within my own community. So all you could say is that I just want to be able to work from within my own community, beyond that really it's to do with technique and method. I don't start up stories with ideas, I just actually begin a story from nothing, like the way a sculptor operates, I just begin from writing some words down and gradually I make a story out of it. The old Scottish term 'makar' really, that's the way I see it. You make a story. You begin from the words, like a craftsman in that sense, and you just make a story. I don't begin with any idea of what that story will be, I just begin and go on from there.

There has been much comment in recent years about a renaissance in Scottish culture in general and literature in particular. Is there a Scottish cultural and literary "movement". If so, how far is it political, left-wing or anti-establishment? And how far do you feel that you are a part of it? For example do you socialise with other Scottish writers in a regular way ?

Well, taking the last part first : yes, I see quite a few Scottish writers - not necessarily regular, but yes I do.

I think, one thing - there's more generosity amongst writers than critics. I don't think writers are really in competition with each other...most writers get on with each other, or most writers I know anyway.

But ok, to take the other side of it...I think there is a growing self confidence amongst people, and that's what's going on in Scottish literature. There is certainly not a literary movement as such, whatever there is. I think it's part of being confident, and that is like saying : 'I'm not saying my language is any better than you, or my culture is any better than you but it's a valid language and valid culture, and as a writer I'll make use of my language'. Just having that confidence to be able to do that, I think, that's the crucial thing that's happened. Now that's taken a long, long time. I mean, there is a tradition of writers in Scotland who have been using or trying to use language in this way. That includes people like Fergusson and Burns, and right through the nineteenth century you'll find one or two (not many) - James Hogg, parts of Stevenson, even parts of Walter Scott as well, where there's an occasional confidence in languagem : so it's not something that's only happened in the last 25 years you know..

Do you see yourself as a "Glasgow writer"?

Well, the fact is I was born and bred in Glasgow...to some extent where you're born, well, that's an accident - it so happens I was born in the city of Glasgow so I'm a Glaswegian writer. I don't feel any particular responsibility from being from Glasgow...I could have been born anywhere. Anyway...there's been all these different cultural experiences here so the culture of Glasgow is really rich and varied, it contains many, many different cultures, a great many different ones, so there is no such thing as the "Glasgow writer" in that sense. There are only writers who live and work in Glasgow really, that's all....

Some critics characterise you as very much the "macho man"...is this fair? Are there any contemporary women writers whose work you admire?

Well there are many, many women writers whose work I admire...see, one of the things is that women have had, in writing, one of the most influential roles in literature, simply because women have had to fight against the existing value, and that value is a paternalist male value.

So some of the most important writers in the tradition that I think I am part of have been women. They're the ones that have had to subvert the whole paternalistic male dominated value system which works within literature. So women have had to find ways of turning it on its head. So the writers at the root of the American realistic tradition have mainly been women, writers like Kate Porter, Gertrude Stein, right through later ones such as Flannery O'Connor...there are so many really important writers who have been women and especially within this tradition of subverting the existing values of authority. So it would just be a nonsense for any writer to not be influenced by women, that's just nonsense...

Now it's interesting that a lot of the "macho male writer" criticism comes from liberal men who make it on behalf of women - in other words the typical liberal position : they are representing the views of what they regard as the victims.

There is the technical point of course you know, and this is an obvious point to me, so much so that it makes it difficult to treat seriously criticisms about being macho - I intentionally work from the perspective of a male narrative voice, in other words, the voice that tells the stories that I write is a male voice. Now take the last novel as an example. This is very deliberately written in the voice of a man who could be an acquaintance of the central character, an acquaintance of the man that goes blind, and also he is telling the story to other men and the ideal setting would be in a pub. So you could say this story is told by a man to other men in a pub and he is telling the story about another guy, and this other guy is a guy who would normally be drinking in the same pub with the same people. In a sense I'm being condemned for what I set out to do intentionally. Much of the criticism is prejudiced...it doesn't actually look at the work, it begins from a prejudice about the work.

You are better known for novels and short stories, but recently you had play on in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dublin, One, Two, Hey - about a rhythm and blues band ?

That's actually the fifth play I've had on. This play was basically a collaboration between myself and George Gallacher of the Poets, the Blues Poets, one of the legendary sixties bands, so it was a great thing to work on. It would be very expensive and very difficult for any company to put this on in Scotland because of the whole way theatre funding operates...it's geared towards amateurs and very cheap productions. Our sort of play, with twelve people, with a lot of music and real musicians doing the music, you couldn't really put that on in Scotland unless you were within one of the big funded theatre companies, because they are the only ones that get that kind of dough. So we had to form our own company and put it on ourselves.

This is the first time I've been involved for five years and I mean normally I can't even get my own plays on in Glasgow. This one wouldn't have been put on except the fact that we put it on ourselves and the Arches Theatre were good enough to let us tour it in there. It doesn't even matter if your play sells out - our play began selling out in Glasgow and in Edinburgh for the five days, but there was no possibility for us getting any help from Glasgow District and Strathclyde Region. There would be no money for us, but they would be very willing to spend upwards of £500,000 with something that fits in with their own political stand point. I'm talking of course about the play about the First World War, because it happens to be a thing in their interest to commemorate and that whole kind of, what could you say, shitty way of operating really.

You were involved in Workers City : which is probably best known for its campaign against many of the grand schemes initiated by Glargow City Council for 1990 Year of Culture. Why was Workers City formed, and what results has it had ?

It was always a wide range of people who didn't have one political view. They did have certain political beliefs in common, you know, things should be seen to be above board and that corruption should not operate. A great many of those involved had been through various party formations and I think one of the things in common was that people were just sickened by the prevailing political systems and that includes the left, the established left.

So I wouldn't presume to speak on behalf of Workers City really. I didn't become involved with Workers City until something like February 1990 itself. I joined a picket at Glasgow's Glasgow because it seemed a thing that I should be supporting.

A Glasgow guy Farquhar McClay had made a statement and had asked for support from people who were in opposition to the European City of Culture year. Now there was a great many people in opposition to that who were not involved in Workers City and that includes writers and artists. Away about eighteen months before the culture city thing we held a huge big meeting one Saturday afternoon and there was about 80-100 people turned up for this, this was either late 1988 or early 1989 and there was a great many writers and artists turned up for this... Dominic Behan was there and Eddie Boyd, Tom Leonard, I think Alistair was there, Alistair Gray, a lot of visual artists and musicians there was so many people there...Farquhar was talking to a lot of the artists he knew were not involved in Workers City and were taking a kind of affumative position outside it.

When we occupied the City Chambers, there was about two hundred people there you know. The same with other issues that horrible thing they did to Elspeth King and Michael Donnelly, that was another case where hundreds of people, thousands of people in fact got involved in that campaign. There was more people that wrote to the Glasgow Herald about that obscenity conducted by Glasgow's Labour authority than any other issue since Billy Graham came here in 1955 or something like that. Each campaign had different people involved in it.

Of course there is the one thing that I still haven't changed my view on, is the whole selling point from Glasgow Council and all of those behind the City of Culture year. I mean they described that as being a celebration of art and culture. It wasn't. It was an attack on art. It attacked art and it attacked artists, there is just no question about that.

You are not known as a campaigner for a Scottish parliament unlike many other people in literature and the arts. Are you opposed to a Scottish parliament ?

No, not at all, its just that I personally don't campaign on behalf of it. As far as I'm personally concerned it's not a major issue. Because you don't campaign on behalf of one issue doesn't mean that you are in opposition to it. It often just means that you don't have the time or energy to commit to it because you are involved in other things.

Having said that, I don't think that a Scottish parliament's the answer to our social and economic problems in Scotland, especially if it's going to be controlled in the same old way, you know, controlled by those who believe that the British electoral system offers the means for radical change in society. So if we get a Scottish parliament through the benevolent grace of the British parliament, then I can't conceive of how that can be some kind of radical thing because otherwise we wouldn't be given it...I don't take part in it, that whole kind of parliamentarian political process to me is an absolute charade.

You are an active campaigner on behalf of those who suffer from asbestos related illness. What made you so concerned about this particular issue ?

I came in contact with a couple of people who were involved in that fight full time really, ex pipe coverers and guys who had the asbestos related diseases, and just became aware of what the issue was. It's rather like that lawyer who started so much of this campaign going in Australia, he could see what was happening in the courts and he couldn't believe it, his quote was "these people are dying, what the fuck's going on here?" you know.

That was actually the thing that came home to me : if these diseases exist then these people are dying. So here are a set of diseases people get because they go to their work and work, and no one is doing anything about it. The government's manufacturing the figures and the medical industry are not diagnosing and the lawyers are accusing them of malingering, the state's not paying benefits, no one knows it's happening, no one knows anything about these diseases. No one knows that the asbestos industry are themselves aware that they are going about killing people, and no one is doing anything about it. I just found my head reeling with implications and found that I couldn't do anything else than be involved really. It was just impossible not to be involved.

The campaigning group in Glasgow got no funding whatsoever, they got nothing, they just got kind of pennies here and there or some donations from individual trade union branches which usually meant that one person was interested and tried to do whip rounds. There was no kind of organised assistance for these people at all coming from the labour movement - in fact, on the contrary, you could say they were being

obstructive. I saw that there was a lot of basic stuff that I could do such as writing or how to speak the language of certain parts of officialdom. So gradually I became totally involved in that campaign, to the extent that I didn't do anything else for over a year, really, I was a full time worker you could say...

When you are involved in this campaign you become very aware of the structures of state...I mean, if you had given up terms like class war, once you become involved in this sort of issue you very much are back to using them again and talking about things like the working class, terms that we are not comfortable using these days. But when you are involved in campaigns like this you start to see in fact that the class war still goes on. And it's not that ordinary working people are on the attack...it's just that war has been perpetrated against them. You are just trying to defend yourself, in a sense, finding ways of organising against these attacks that are continually going on, and you find that the state, the British state, is operational on every front against you. All these different institutions such as the medical profession, the legal profession, the DSS, all these different aspects of state, are all kind of refining their own arms against victims of industrial disease. And it's refined to such an extent that people who are actually killing other people, there is no recourse under law to bring them to trial.

So what you find is that it's almost as though civil law has been set up by the state so that the state doesn't have to answer to criminal charges. In a sense this is what your awareness of the fight of people suffering industrial diseases is about. It's about things like murderers getting off scot free - that's basically what it's about...

Are there any other issues that you have been involved in campaigning on behalf of ?

I have tried to help in issues around race...the fight that black people have in Britain, for black people it's like the whole of the state is on the attack against them...

In an analogy, in the way that you are a victim of asbestos related disease, you go to the doctor expecting the doctor to diagnose your disease. You find they don't do it and you've got to fight against it. Now similarly if you are a victim of racist assaults, or a member of your family has been killed by racists, you would naturally expect the police to look for the victims, or to say that you have been assaulted, or that a member of your family has been killed by racists, or whatever. That's in fact not what happens. What you find is that you have to tell the police about motive and you have to actually prove that the member of your family has been killed by racists. And you start to go through and find out in fact that, no, it's not just racism on the street, and it's not just one person has an asbestos related disease - it's the whole state itself doing these things...every arm of it is designed to aid and abet the perpetrators.

Can you tell us a little about your background, your work and trade union experience ?

I left school at 15 and started as a message boy and apprentice compositor in the printing trade. My family emigrated when I was 17. There was nothing in SOGAT articles that would allow an apprentice to leave and emigrate with his or her family and resume the apprenticeship in another country, so you were basically expelled, and

to get themselves out of it they called it "voluntary expulsion". I would say that was quite important for me because when I came back to this country, which was only a few months later, and I went back to the printer which was John Thomson's in Partick, they were very happy that I resumed as an apprentice compositor again - and the shop steward, my "father of the chapel", he had the horrible duty of having to tell me the firm would take me back but SOGAT wouldn't allow it. They said "oh no, we can't allow that, this guy is voluntary expelled, and we don't care, there is no way that we can allow him back in", so therefore I wasn't allowed back in...

So from that point on, in retrospect, I have a fairly kind of jaundiced attitude towards the full time organisation of the trade union movement, because I had kind of bumped my head against it at that time... Another thing I remember when our family emigrated to the States, I remember going after a job at one point and finding this wee printer over in Pasadena and they said "oh yes great you can start work with us as soon as you are eighteen" - because you can't work in the States until you are eighteen "You just wait another six months and you can start with us and meanwhile you can go and see the union man here". I saw the union guy there and I remember being amused at that time and surprised that the trade union guy in Pasadena had heard of the secretary of the SOGAT branch in Glasgow at that time (so I'm talking about '63, '64), that he knew of him. Back in Glasgow I remember I got a letter saying "are you coming back to work in the States we've got this job for you", so if I had gone back to the States in '64 I could have resumed my apprenticeship out in Pasadena, but here in Glasgow although the employers were willing, the SOGAT hierarchy would not allow it.

So from there then I began a kind of whole process of jobs at that time. I joined the line out in Shieldhall, the old Cooperative shoe factory...they used to make things like Beatle boots...so I was a shoe maker for a time, I was given one of those horrible jobs on the line, you know, on the piecework line where your worked twice as hard as the guy up from you but he's getting about 12 times as much as you do. Again, the sort of discrepancy amongst guys on the same assembly line also gives you a very jaundiced view of the trade union, what their priorities are. I stuck that for about four or five months. I did a lot of different types of jobs - what else did I do? - selling and various stuff like that, factories - and then joined the buses. That was a liberation for me becoming a bus conductor...

Then I left Scotland altogether when I was about 19 and went to work in Manchester... well, the irony there, I worked in Turner and Yules, in Trafford Park, I mixed for asbestos sheeting. My job was similar to what you do if you are a brickie's labourer so I mixed cement and asbestos and water to make asbestos boards with a wee mixer, kind of a third the size of a concrete mixer...I worked on that for quite a few months, it was a great job you know, I mean, there was only immigrants that worked on this job, whether you were from Glasgow or whether you were Irish or whether you were from the Caribbean or occasionally from Pakistan or from Eastern Europe. There were a lot of immigrants from Eastern Europe, older guys from Hungary and Georgia and various parts of Russia and Poland. There was very few people from England worked in these jobs.



After that job I worked in a copper mill, another amazing kind of prehistoric type of operation. I mean the safety equipment in this job was just a joke, so there is a wee bit for a novel of mine where a character's toe touches the copper bar and his shoes burst into flames. That happened to a mate of mine who was an electrician but couldn't get a job as an electrician, so he came semi skillin with me and discovered a whole new world...so when his shoe burst into flames he threw down his fuckin tongs and just said "that's me I'm chuckin" and walked out. If there'd been a tradesmen there he could do things like that but whereas if you're right at the bottom of the heap you know you can't do these sorts of things!

I stuck that job for quite a long while, these jobs always pay better money than ordinary labouring jobs. You could work things like 12 hour shifts and that gave you plenty of money to buy your own safety equipment, you know, you could spend your money on safety shoes and things like that. Anyway after that I went to London...

There is an important point in the way that trade unions are perceived I think, really, that hasn't I don't think ever been stressed as much as it should be stressed - the difference between a trade union for an actual craft or a trade and how trade unions operate for labourers and semi-skilled people. As a boy in SOGAT I ran up against one of the strongest unions at that time and one of the most powerful unions in the business. And one of the ways it got strong, obviously, is also why I was kind of expelled...

Now in all these other jobs. I experienced the exact opposite of that. I experienced trade unionism at its least powerful. I was either a labourer or I was semi-skilled and essentially trade unions don't exist for workers like that. All my experience in industrial disease and industrial accident and injury after that has always just established that safety is so far down the list for labourers and semi-skilled as to be non existent. Labourers and semiskilled people do some of the most hazardous jobs of all really, with the fewest safety precautions. In some of these jobs an ordinary part of your job maybe eight times an hour is avoiding serious injury or death, and that isn't an exaggeration. It is actually part of being skilled at your job and concentrating on your job so that you don't lose fingers and ultimately you don't get killed. And it is very hard for people who have never worked in industry at this level or in the construction industry, they think that when people say what I'm saying just now that they are talking metaphors or something like that, and we are not - this is the literal truth you know. Basically we have scars to prove it. You could actually point to something and go "see that scar there, I remember getting that because I knew I had two winners up and I was waiting for another two, so I was thinking about how I was going to spend the money and bump I suddenly got hit in the eye...

The last ordinary job I did was in 1975 really, when I worked in McLellan's Rubber works - and that was a case in question again. That was the Transport and General Workers. So many ordinary labour and semi-skilled jobs are covered by the T&G, it really is the general union for so many workers, but at that level it is basically non existent really. So again I got a very jaundiced view of trade unionism, but from the opposite view. It was just so weak, I mean, it was actually an embarrassment to the

labour movement. You couldn't even give it the benefit of the doubt and say it was corrupt it was just so kind of weak and inefficient and timid and passive...

Recently you were involved in supporting RMT during the signal workers dispute and put quite a bit of effort into that. But apart from that, what are your thoughts on the current state of the trade union movement, particularly in Scotland, and what do you think the STUC should be doing in the forthcoming period in the run up to the General Election ?

I think above all they should be listening to the members, and being aware of what actually the members feel themselves. They should be aware of things like the reality of democracy, they should be aware of the discrepancy between that and representative democracy and they shouldn't allow themselves to be sucked into the trap of being representatives, in the sense that they can make decisions on behalf of their members, often without recourse to what the membership actually think. An awful lot of people are going to be very kind of sceptical about, for example, a Scottish parliament, so I don't think that the TUC leadership should try somehow to ignore the scepticism. I think they should be supportive of things like the Scottish parliament, or even the Labour Party, and allow their scepticism to be up front. In other words, I don't think they should align themselves with this kind of whole notion of representational politics.

I was talking about the internal elitism, the way all trade unions operate as a meritocracy...as soon as you talk about bonus, piecework, blah, blah, everything like that, or issues like health and safety, you will find out that higher up the scale you go the better the conditions. So that means, for example if you are a joiner or if you are an electrician or a plumber then you are going to get much better access than for example a brickie's labourer, a chippie's labourer or a spark's labourer. The kind of practices that the tradesmen get, you won't get, you'll have to fight for them. So even at that level these kinds of discrepancies within the trade unions have to be looked at I mean, these issues are absolutely fundamental. A lot of these things can actually be taken in hand by ordinary members themselves, they don't have to wait for the leaders to do it.

Take industrial disease for instance, I mean, anyone involved in the asbestos thing, you know, you become so cynical about the leadership of any union, because of what can be done and what cannot be done, that ultimately you feel that there is not much point talking to them at all, it is much better to try and get across or get access to ordinary members, what you might call the shop floor, and say "look, there are things that we can do just now". There are things that can be done and that will bring its own pressures on those who have greater power within the trade union movement.

Over the last 15 or 16 years, since the mid 70s, before Thatcher came into power, the movement has become passive and one of the things ordinary members can do is embarrass and shame the leadership - not just the full time officials but also other officials. To shame them and show this is how strong we are, there is this strength here and don't try and manage it. The problem of course is the leadership both full time and otherwise fall into the role of being managers and they end up managing the

activities of the membership on behalf of the employers. That is not what their role is, their role is to genuinely represent the views, beliefs and activities of the membership.

When I was on the buses there was no such thing as an official strike within the T&G, it was a long standing joke. There only ever was one official strike. What happened in any strike was the very first people you took on was your own union, I mean, that was how it was, it probably still is. The first people who told you to go back to work was always the trade union hierarchy. The bosses always sent them, the first thing they did was get the full timers down from Bath Street to your place of work to say, right lads let's get back to work. That was just a standing joke.

That was how the trade union leadership was perceived and it's no different now. If the TUC can do anything it is just not to be passive and not to be timid, not to be cowardly. Above all they have to have faith in the people and encourage open ideas, open discourse. A genuine democracy of thought really is what's very very important and not to be afraid of open debate.

## **James Kelman**

### HOME PAGES

We would like to produce a survey of 'home pages' that are to be found upon the World Wide Net. If you have an suggestions as to one that might be included, then please let us know.

### St Petersburg Centre for Gender Issues

The St Petersburg Centre for Gender Issues, founded in 1992 with support from a grant from a German foundation maintains a library / archive. The main goal of the archive is to collect information on women's organisations, feminism and gender research and to make it available to the general public. Materials are obtained both by purchasing directly from publishers and stores as well as through private donations. Many of the materials can be borrowed ; there are copy services available for other documents.

The archive, as well as the centre as a whole, is open to the public ; the primary users of the archive are independent researchers and university students. The centre is supported by the Heinrich Boell Foundation and maintains connections with analogous centres for gender research in Moscow and Ukraine. The next project that the archive staff plans to embark on is a computerised database of its holdings.

# An introduction to the Kate Sharpley Library

This is a brief introduction to the Kate Sharpley Library. Hopefully it will give you an idea of what we do. We hope it will encourage people to use and help expand our archive.

## Who we are

The KSL is a libertarian archive and documentation centre. We aim to be comprehensive within the political boundaries we have set ourselves. And we do mean comprehensive. Anything that is relevant will be included, because the Library is not a collection of our favourite books, but as complete a record as possible of what the anarchist movement has done. Politically we are concerned with the Anarchist movement and it's anti-authoritarian relatives like anarcho-feminism, Anarcho-syndicalism, Council Communism, Revolutionary Unionism, Situationism, Syndicalism and the like. We are not interested in the "Libertarian" capitalists of the right.

The purpose of the KSL is to give the anarchist movement control over it's own history, not only to prevent today's media bullshit being tomorrow's academic gravy train, but also to encourage critical thought within the movement. We should give flowers to the rebels who failed, yes, but we owe it to all concerned not to repeat avoidable mistakes.

The materials we aim to collect are those produced by Anarchist or Libertarian groups or individuals. We are also interested in materials about these people or organisations from those outside the movement, be it the mainstream press reporting on Anarchism, or other groups referring to (or attacking) it. Also we collect non-anarchist materials published by Anarchist presses (Like Cienfuegos Press' great bodice-ripper "A visit to the island of Sanday"). We will weed out all of the thousands of news reports which talk about "anarchy reigning" somewhere as a synonym for chaos. Likewise, any punk-era stuff that endlessly reproduces the circled A, but doesn't attempt to actually talk about anarchism will be chucked.

We do not have the time or resources to collect material about interesting single issues, unless they have some specific relevance to the Libertarian movement. Often this will rely on inside knowledge of a particular campaign because people have often worked as individuals rather than as part of an anarchist group.

Obviously, in terms of historic materials we have to fight against the multiple demons of universities and collectors buying up materials, the losses and destruction caused by Fascism and repression as well as 'natural' losses.

## What do we have on our shelves ?

### **Published Materials**

Though they are the core of our collection, books are one of the easier parts of the library to work with. Books are a doddle. Books tend to last much better than other printed sources. Being less spontaneous, books usually tell you more about themselves and their publishers.

Things are not quite so easy in the world of pamphlets, however. Every piece of paper tells a story, but some of them are quite confused. Is this short duplicated essay a pamphlet or a leaflet? Is this photocopied pamphlet someone's personal copy or is it a reprint from some small and anonymous group? None of which makes much difference to the ideas that are being spread, but does raise questions about the people who are spreading them.

Periodicals are the other main published form, and provided they survive the 'first issue fever' we have a greater chance of getting a complete set. Some of them run like clockwork, while some delight in being unpredictable.

Beyond the big three of books, pamphlets and periodicals is the music department. Anyone who has the "Songs of Anarchism and Revolution" tape will know that it's not just punk stuff, but includes Parisian music-hall songs about Ravachol too. We also have (and are looking to expand) a collection of relevant films and documentaries.

### **Ephemera (a.k.a. Odds and Sods)**

After these came the barely-charted shallows of ephemera. It's main item is bibliography - anything to do with books - ranging from last year's AK Press catalogue to old flyers advertising the impending publication of "God and the State".

Ephemeral means non-permanent, but it does not mean irrelevant. Political activity can generate this sort of stuff like a confetti machine, but they can be vital to reconstruct how a political campaign progressed or how a group developed. Ephemera also includes posters, leaflets, postcards, news cuttings and even party invites. Materials like these are particularly useful with background information attached - for example flyers will rarely say what year they were produced. Who put them out - and why?

### **Unpublished materials**

The unpublished stuff includes diaries, letters, manuscripts (books written but never printed). Draft copies of articles can be valuable for the light they throw on thinking in progress. Any Anarchist library would gladly take a bundle of letters to Kropotkin from his landlord saying "pay the rent", while a collection of my gas bills would be less enthusiastically received. It's a question of historical distance, and there's a fine line between the enlightening and the irrelevant.

The other real treat among unpublished materials is memoirs - these don't even need to be old timers' accounts, though they're often written after the event, as they give a vibrant snapshot of what was going on in a particular place at a particular time.

## What we do

The KSL collective is like a crack squad of scavengers. Like trained hunters we search high and low from charity shops to antiquarian booksellers and even in a few skips. The only questions that worry us are: "Is it relevant?" and "Have we already got it?" Any foreign language works are handed to our team of hungry translators.

Of course, getting hold of the materials is only the first part. Any of these things can be of structural interest which is why we are a comprehensive collection. Without caring the slightest about Situationist critiques you can say "oh look, a Situationist critique of nursery rhymes, I wouldn't have expected to see that printed by the Red Guards in Peking in 1968 shortly after its tiny Parisian print run".

On the other hand, there are some things, either original works or secondary assessments which are interesting because of the ideas they contain. This is the kind of thing that we're likely to reprint, especially if it has only appeared in a foreign language, or is otherwise unobtainable. One of the main activities of the library has been to reprint historic pamphlets or relevant commentaries. Shorter articles go into our occasional bulletin.

## How we can help you

Our collection is now freely accessible, and we are happy to answer questions through the post, and do a limited amount of photocopying.

Information is only as valuable as the way it's used. We are glad to help anarchist researchers, to see our ideas spread. We're also happy to cooperate with people who are looking for material to republish - most of our resources go into publishing and we still have plenty of material waiting.

It helps if you're specific about what you want to find out. If you say "I'm interested in Spanish Anarchism", we would produce too many titles to print. Try asking about particular organisations, time periods, or aspects. Best of all, read everything you can on the topic you're interested in, and after you've finished you can write a pamphlet for us!

## How you can help us

### 1. bulk donations

The library relies on donations for most of our materials. Individuals or organisations will often donate a large number of books. Because we are comprehensive and only keep one copy of each item we often have books donated which are duplicates. Books and pamphlets we sell at reasonable prices to raise money for hard-to-get books (and to keep the ideas in circulation). Some periodicals are resellable because they are full

of useful information. Out of date materials we can exchange with other Anarchist libraries.

## 2. recent / current materials

If you are involved in producing a paper or Anarchist activities you can give your publication direct to us. We're quite happy to exchange with our own bulletin. Of course, if you know of a local, one-off or occasional paper or pamphlet - the kind of thing we're otocopy. It you only know of something send us the author's name, the title, publisher, date and place of publication. Our bulletin also lists titles that we are looking for.

## 3. hunting stuff down

When our catalogue is printed we hope it will be a definitive guide to published libertarian materials. Before that, if you think we are missing something either donate it to us or send us a photocopy or a copy of your catalogue.

## 4. last but not least

We are always in need of money to cover running costs and publish more. Friends abroad should write and ask us about donating - there's nothing worse than a \$1 cheque which costs \$20 to cash. The other need is for accounts from members of the movement- you don't need to write a book but you can put your experiences on the record for others.

**KSL, BM Hurricane, London, WC1 3XX, United Kingdom**

### ERWIN MARKS

Dr Erwin Marks, Born 1931, Died January 1998. His article in ISC 5 was especially translated for us by Laurentius and first appeared in "Laurentius" 2 / 1995. For those who read German, some biographical details about Dr Marks appeared in "Laurentius" 1 / 1997.

## Will Nyanjiru be silenced ?

Extract from "Libraries and rural development", University of Nairobi Library Magazine, No. 4, 1980.

Nyanjiru wakes up at 4 am ; a water debe on her head, she walks for an hour and a half to the nearest stream. Then she climbs back from the river to her home, picking up dry wood on the way for fire ; she arrives home three hours later to start the day's other work : crying children to be calmed with bits of left over food, chicken to be fed and watered ; then to start digging her half acre shamba in the hot, burning sun. This is the daily routine for a peasant.

And this is the life of a modern librarian : Kamau pats his dogs fondly as they surround his new Volvo. This is his daily ritual. He realises that the gates are not open yet and hoots loudly. Where is Mutua? Does he not know that today is the library board meeting and he has to report early? They are to discuss library regulations and he has prepared a long list of don'ts that users should adhere to. As Mutua opens the gates, Kamau speeds out, the silent noise of the Volvo soothing his mind. He starts thinking about library rules. Yes, users must be controlled. Only last week he found a fellow eating mandazi in the library. How can that be allowed ? Kamau had him thrown out. The first rule is going to be about eating in the library. And then of course "Silence": "Silence in the library":

Kamau feels happy as he enters the library parking. "Silence Please": "Silence in the Library" ; "No eating in the library"; "American Library Association Rules for Filing catalogue cards"; "Anglo-American Cataloguing System" ... In such an atmosphere of threats, admonitions, foreign terminology and practices lives and works the modern librarian. Inside the stone walls of the library, in total peace and calm among the well preserved volumes, he is oblivious to the ruin and chaos of hunger, starvation and mass exploitation outside.

The contrasting lives of Nyanjiru and Kamau can be found in any Majority World country. Their activities are taking place within miles of each other and on the same day. Yet the two are so removed from each other that they may easily be on different planets or in different historical ages.

The library is a concrete structure inaccessible to Nyanjiru, and Nyanjiru as a library user is unacceptable to the librarians.

For Nyanjiru there is no time to waste, no compromises to be made. All her labour and thoughts are to satisfy her family's basic material needs : food, clothing and shelter. Anything that helps her in this work, she accepts with open arms and mind. Anything that prevents her from acquiring what she needs, she will fight. Her information needs are clear - she wants information which will help her to produce and protect her material requirements.



On the other hand lies the library service - set up and maintained through 'assistance' from a colonial, neo-colonial 'mother' country. A mother whose very touch brings death. "Silence Please, Silence in the library':

Silence, in spite of Nyanjiru's dying children ; silence, in spite of Nyanjiru's twenty-four hour working day ; silence, even though Nyanjiru's labours fill up the stomachs of "ladies and gentlemen" thousands of miles away, while her own stomach remains empty.

Thus it is not surprising that Nyanjiru knows no library, and no library knows Nyanjiru. The world of Nyanjiru and the world of library services as they exist today are far apart. Libraries based on traditions of foreign information practices cannot serve the needs of people like Nyanjiru.

Nyanjiru belongs to her own people's information system based on the oral traditions and experiences of history which she can understand, trust and apply in order to fight for her existence.

## **Shiraz Durrani**

### **Danish Developments**

Having been in and out of Denmark on a very regular basis for the last couple of decades, I was particularly struck on a recent visit by some of the changes that have taken place within the last year or so. Some of these changes are within the Public Library System and Information world.

The first thing that strikes one is that a very high proportion of advertisements have Web addresses with them. Even the buses within København have a web address painted upon them, in order that one might access the time-table from ones home.

The most note worthy observation comes from the Odense Public library system, on Fyn, where there are available CD ROM's that might be borrowed. There is even a catalogue of Children's CD ROM's that are available, which include titles that are of both an educational and recreational nature.

The really heartening aspect of visiting Public Libraries in Denmark is that public money is still being spent on them. Coming from a country where cuts within the public sector are almost regarded as 'very normal and natural', to see what is being done within Public libraries where books and information work is regarded as important, well it almost seems like a Utopian dream.

## **Martyn Lowe**

# A Riot to Read

**Black, Alistair and Muddiman, Dave** ; *Understanding Community Librarianship : the Public Library in Post-Modern Britain* ; 1997, Aldershot, Hants : Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 173pp. £35.00 ISBN 1859722431

The latest official reports on the future of public libraries (Eg "New Library : The People's Network", Library and Information Commission, 1997) offer a common panacea : information technology. Black and Muddiman suggest an alternative solution : community librarianship. They issue a challenge to make public libraries more attractive, relevant and part of their communities.

Reading this book was both an inspirational and depressing experience. The inspiration came from reading the efforts made in places like Lambeth and Manchester in the early 80's to really "break down the walls" of public libraries and deliver community librarianship. The depression set in when it became clear that these efforts were sporadic, short-lived and all but over by 1985. The authors give an overview of community librarianship and demonstrate that public libraries reflect the society which they exist in.

When public libraries first opened they were part of the Victorian social reform movement that aimed to improve the lot of the "deserving poor" ; but not the "undeserving poor" - those at the margins of society - who have never been catered for by public libraries. After the second world war, public libraries took on the welfare state approach of the Labour government. But, as Black and Muddiman point out, welfarism was premised on things being done *for* rather than *by* or *with* people.

Under eighteen years of Tory government, a consumerist approach to public services was developed, based on the premise that library users are customers and the customer knows best. It is too early to say what will happen to public libraries in post-modern Britain under New Labour. But it is unlikely that many senior public librarians will action Black and Muddiman's radical approach to community librarianship which is based on a class analysis and a commitment to "prioritise, judge and discriminate in favour of the working class, ethnic minorities, and the disadvantaged".

Community librarianship is now regarded as an outmoded concept associated with Loony Left councils from the 80's. As a result the subject area is rarely researched or written about, although the authors have amassed an impressive bibliography by commentators and practitioners from 1850 to the present day. In terms of presentation and style, the chronological narrative flows well and contains a good mixture of theory, analysis and practice. An index would have been helpful and the price tag of £35 is a challenge to the information poor. But this will be the best investment made in many staff libraries for ages.

# A Riot to Read

## New Internationalist, Nos. 288, 289, 290

I must confess that I used to be an NI subscriber until it became so liberal and do-goodish. The causes it supports are always nice and unimpeachable. Issue 288, for example, was all about endangered species. The production is always excellent, with plenty of coloured photos and useful statistics. But getting beyond page one is a struggle. For here each month we meet a different member of the NI co-operative. I have no problem with co-ops, but judging by the passport photos in these 3 issues, this one is particularly white, middle aged and middle class.

The letters page is worth a read and then there is the letter from different parts of the USSR bemoaning the disasters that have fallen these countries since the demise of Communism. The update section is a useful gathering of world news, and then the main feature starts. This is introduced by the guest editor and there is often a fictional piece or an article by an expert or "native". The fact pages give all the background information, and there is a potted history of the theme as well.

If at the end of all this you feel like getting involved there is an action column which gives the contact details of various campaigning groups. Towards the end of each NI there is an interesting miscellany. The NI interview is with champions of the poor and needy (Eg No.290 is with Robert Bropho the Aboriginal activist). This is followed by reviews of the latest music, books and films which deal with NI type subjects. Each item is rated from excellent to poor according to its politics and entertainment value.

The "classic" is a review of a book that has stood the test of time in terms of its ideas and influence, such as the Selected Poems of Pablo Neruda (No. 288). The next page is a recent addition and, I think, a waste of time. The top half of the page is given over to "curiosities" - a question and answer section which works in the Guardian, but flops here. Beneath this there is a politically correct crossword. The "endpiece" is always a nicely packaged article by a guest freelance journalist on a cross- theme subject such as Gordon Feller's piece on when do imported cigarettes count as "humanitarian" aid ? (No. 289)

NI is rounded off by a country profile. Three columns of comment and a map are accompanied by factual data (leader, economy, people, health, culture) and star ratings : up to 5 stars for income distribution, self-reliance, position of women, literacy, freedom, life expectancy and politics. Did you know, for example, that people live to 72 in North Korea - this is the same as South Korea and merits 4 stars (No.290). The final pages are taken up by adverts for right-on products, many of which are produced by NI, such as the NI world guide CD Rom. An annual index is sent to all subscribers and the publication is reasonably priced.

## **Fellow Travellers**

**ACTSA : Action for Southern Africa, 28 Penton Street, London, N1 9SA, 0171 833 3133**

Formerly the Anti-Apartheid Movement, ACTSA supports the struggle of people in South Africa, Angola and neighbouring countries. Publishes ACTSA News.

**Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2-91 Albert Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3B 1G5**

A not for profit worker owned radical publishing house that is particularly interested in writing that addresses issues of gender, class, authority, ethnicity, culture and media.

**Baby Milk Action, 23 St Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB3 2AX, 01223 464420**

BMA raises awareness about the damage caused by artificial infant feeding. It provides information to individuals and groups and publishes Update three times a year.

**Book Aid International, 39/41 Coldharbour Lane, London, SE5 9NR, 0171 733 3577**

Formally the Ranfurly Library Service, Book Aid arranges for books and journals to be sent to schools and libraries in the Majority World. Publishes Interchange.

**Canon Collins Educational Trust for Southern Africa, 22 The Ivories, 6 Northampton St, London, N1 2HY, 0171 354 1462**

CCETSA is a registered charity supporting education in Southern Africa.

**Conscience, 601 Holloway Road, London, N19 4DJ, 0171 561 1061**

Conscience campaigns for the right to an alternative use for the military part of our taxes.

**Delta, Box Z, 13 Biddulph Street, Leicester, LE2 1BH, 0116 255 3223**

Delta provides news and background on Ogoni, Shell and Nigeria.

**Independent News Collective, 87 Kirkstall Road, London, SW2 4HE, 0181 671 7920**

INK is an association of radical and alternative publishers that covers issues of social, political and personal change, which are often neglected in the mainstream media.

## **Fellow Travellers**

**Index on Censorship, 33 Islington High Street, London, N1 9BR**

Index on Censorship is the magazine for free speech. Index records those voices that are stifled by war, poverty or just plain old fashioned censorship.

**Intermediate Technology, Myson House, Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 3HT, 01788 560631**

Large scale high technology can breed dependence instead of relieving poverty. If lasting improvements are to be made in the Majority World, appropriate technology is necessary.

**Kurdistan Information Centre, 10 Glasshouse Yard, London, EC1A 4JN, 0171 250 1315**

KIC provides the latest news on the situation in Kurdistan and publishes Kurdistan Information Bulletin (monthly) and Kurdistan Report (bi-monthly).

**Labour Action for Peace, 37 Hollingworth Road, Orpington, BR5 1AQ, 0181 467 5367**

An organisation of Labour Party members working for peace, socialism and disarmament. Publishes Labour Peace Action.

**Library of wheels for Nonviolence and Peace, Samiramis, PO Box 20961, Jerusalem, 91202**

LOWNP is affiliated to the IFOR (International Fellowship of Reconciliation). IFOR is the Christian Pacifist International. It has 3,000 children and 12,000 family members.

**Lipman-Miliband Trust, 67 North Park Avenue, Leeds, LS8 1HP**

The Trust gives grants of up to £500 to individuals, organisations and activities for socialist research, publications and progressive causes.

**One World Linking Association, Town Hall, Chesterfield, S40 1LP**

This organisation helps local authorities, communities, schools and other groups in the UK link with partners in the South. Publishes One World Linking.

## Vita Books

P. O. Box 2908 LONDON N17 6YY

e-mail : 100710.263 @ compuserve. com

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## Mau Mau Research Centre

P.O. Box 190048, South Richmond Hill Station, Jamaica  
NY 11419 USA



### Publications List 1998

Author / Title / ISBN No.	Price
Ngugi wa Thiong'o Writing against Neocolonialism. 1986 1 869886 00 3	£ 3.50
Durrani, Shiraz: Kimaathi, Mau Mau's First Prime Minister of Kenya. 1986 1 869886 01 1	3.50
ILRIG Kenya Uhuru: Whose Freedom? 1989*	3.50
Maina wa Kinyatti Mau Mau: A Revolution Betrayed. 1991	4.50
Maina wa Kinyatti A Season of Blood: Prison Poems. 1995 1 869886 07 0	6.50
Gus John Reflections on Black History Month. 1995*	1.50
Maina wa Kinyatti Kenya: A Prison Notebook. 1996 1 869886 08 9	12.00
Koigi wa Wamwere Justice on Trial: The Koigi Case 1997* 1 869886 10 0	16.00
Maina wa Kinyatti Mother Kenya: Letters from Prison. 1997 1 869886 09 7	17.50
Vita Posters: Kimaathi / Muthoni / Arms & Struggle	0.75

\* Distributed by Vita Books

*New for 1998*

## **Karimi Nduthu; A Life in the Struggle**

**1 869886 12 7 (July, 1998)**

Maina wa Kinyatti Mwaki Utangihoreka [Inextinguishable Fire: A Story of Imprisonment under Moi's rule] 1 869886 11 9
Durrani, Shiraz Never be Silent; Publishing and Imperialism in Kenya, 1886-1963. 1 869886 05 4

Vita Books, established in 1986, is a small, alternative publisher specialising in books on anti-imperialist struggles and the establishment of just and democratic societies. It seeks to give voice to those who otherwise would remain voiceless. Vita Books co-publishes its titles with Mau Mau Research Centre, New York.

### Distributors

**Australia** Ndungi wa Mungai 20 Wattle Avenue, Glenhuntly VIC. 3163. Australia.

**Europe** Central Books, 99 Wallis Road E9 5LN Tel. 0181 986 4854

**Kenya** Kimuri Book Publishers and Distributors, P.O.Box 67395, Nairobi